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YAZZIE REPORTS ON EDUCATION ACTIVITIES.

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THE FUNCTIONS, ACCOMPLISHMENTS, AND NEEDS OF THE NAVAJO TRIBAL EDUCATION COMMITTEE IS THE SUBJECT OF THIS REPORT TO THE SENATE SUB-COMMITTEE ON INDIAN EDUCATION. THE MAIN JOB OF THE EDUCATION COMMITTEE IS TO SERVE AS A CONNECTING LINK BETWEEN THE NAVAJO TRIBAL COUNCIL AND EDUCATIONAL AGENCIES SERVING NAVAJO YOUTH. THE MAIN ACCOMPLISHMENT OF THE COMMITTEE HAS BEEN AN INCREASED INVOLVEMENT OF PARENTS AND TRIBAL LEADERS IN THE SCHOOL PROGRAM. THE EDUCATION COMMITTEE HAS ALSO ENCOURAGED THE USE OF PUBLIC INFORMATION MASS MEDIA IN RELATING THE EDUCATIONAL ACCOMPLISHMENTS OF THE NAVAJO CHILDREN. CONFERENCES HAVE BEEN SPONSORED AS HAVE CAMPAIGNS TO ENCOURAGE THE CHILDREN TO CONTINUE THEIR EDUCATION. EFFECTIVE UTILIZATION AND COORDINATION OF FEDERAL PROGRAMS HAS ENABLED SEVERAL INSTRUCTIONAL PROGRAMS AND A DEMONSTRATION SCHOOL TO BECOME OPERATIONAL. BOARDING SCHOOLS, IMPROVED ROADS, AND ADDITIONAL FINANCIAL SUPPORT ARE LISTED AS THE PRIMARY NEEDS IN NAVAJO EDUCATION. THIS ARTICLE APPEARS IN THE "NAVAJO TIMES," WINDOW ROCK, ARIZONA, APRIL 4, 1968, P.27. (ES)

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(Editor's Note: The following report was prepared by Allen D. Yazzie, Chairman of the Navajo Tribal Education Committee, for presentation to the Senate sub-committee on Indian education at its meeting at Flagstaff).

Jim Dash

I would like to preface my remarks to this sub-committee with an expression of appreciation for the interest of its members in American Indians and their education. For a number of years I have served as chairman of the Education Committe of the Navajo Tribal Council and I have long felt the need for such interest.

Today, I would like to briefly review the membership and functions of the Navajo Tribal Education Committee and some of the needs and accomplishments of Navajo Education as seen by this committee.

As you might know, the Education Committee is appointed by the Navajo Tribal Council and its five members are all councilmen. The main job of the Education Committee is to serve as a connecting link between the Navajo Tribal Council and educational agencies serving Navajo youth. Also, the Education Committee conceives its job as providing leadership to the Federal, public, and parochial agencies in identifying the needs of Navajo youth.

The Education Committee appreciates the importance of this task when it considers that the median age of the reservation population is about 17 years. Thus, programs being provided this age group are of key importance.

In early 1966, the Navajo Area of the Bureau of Indian Affairs was formed. At this time, the Education Committee met with representatives of the New Navajo Area to consider the direction that Navajo Education should take. From the discussions that ensued, the Education Committee selected four goals for Navajo Education. These goals are:

1. To attack the unique problems of Indian students by the provision of unique programs suited to the needs of these students, such as the ESL program.
2. To seek maximum feasible involvement of parents and tribal leaders in the education program.
3. To develop a public information program which reflects progress made on a continuing basis.
4. To endeavor to assist in any way possible so that full utilization can be made of resources, including the Economic Opportunity Act, Public Law 89-10, and other similar programs which can benefit the Indian people.

The Committee feels that significant progress has been made in meeting these goals in the past two years.

First, and of key importance, the last two years has seen the involvement of parents and tribal leaders reach a new high. The Education Committee set aside special days during the school year for honoring parents and tribal leaders. Special programs are planned at the schools on these days to recognize parents and tribal leaders, and show the importance of their involvement every day. During the past two years, with Education Committee guidance, 9 out of 10 Federal schools have formed boards of education which are playing an increasing role in school affairs.

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Further, the Education Committee has encouraged all in Navajo education to utilize public information media to tell the "Navajo Education Story" with particular reference to the accomplishments of the students. Each year, the Education Committee sponsors an annual youth conference where the accomplishments of the students are dramatized.

One means the Education Committee employs to effect coordination of agencies serving Navajo students is through an annual Navajo Education Conference of two or three days duration it sponsors. Through this, programs underway are reviewed and concerted action sought. The Committee also enlists the aid and support of all agencies in the "back to school" campaign it sponsors each fall to encourage all Navajo students to continue their education.

The Committee endeavors to get all agencies to develop relevant or appropriate instructional programs particularly suited to the needs of Navajo youth. Public Law 89-10, the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, has been of much assistance on this.

Through this act, all public and Federal schools have, for the first time, been able to fund projects which give particular attention to the problems encountered by Navajo youth.

To illustrate the effects of this act, Federal schools have been able to enlist the assistance of leading colleges and universities in planning and developing an English as-a-second-language program in all Federal classrooms on the reservation. This is of marked assistance to the 9 out of 10 Navajo students who come to school speaking only Navajo. Further, through a contract with a nearby university Navajo social studies units are being developed which will help the students appreciate their rich heritage and develop a postive concept of self which will lead to future accomplishments.

The Education Committee is pleased with the progress being made and hope that PL 89-10 funds continue to be available to schools serving Navajo students.

The committee is also pleased with the demonstration school established two years ago at Rough Rock, Arizona. We feel that this school has been successful in identifying staff memebers needed at all schools for community and parental liaison work, and ways that the role of the Board of Education can be enlarged. We feel that the national attention given this school has been of much benefit to Navajo Education. This school is jointly sponsored by the Bureau of Indian Affairs, Office of Economic Opportunity, and the Navajo Tribe.

Now to some needs - the concern of this Senate Subcommittee, that it is necessary for students young and old to attend boarding schools, is shared. In fact, this has been a concern of long standing on the Navajo Reservation and with the Education Committee.

This concern has led to an attempt to utilize all possible opportunities for students to attend school on a day basis. Some progress has been made on this. In 1952, only 2,579 Navajo students attended public and Federal day schools. In 1967, most of the over 17,000 Navajo students in public schools attended on a day basis, and about 1,000 students attended Federal schools on a day basis. This shows that some progress had been made.

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Students now in boarding schools are generally from the most isolated and most sparsely populated areas of the reservation. Recent surveys have shown that it would take one mile of road to pick up 4 or 5 students. In order to be serviceable, the road constructed would need to be hard surfaced so that it would be usable throughout the year. Road building efforts short of this in the past has been, at best, of temporary value.

At the same time, the Education Committee recognizes that a main need of the reservation is the development of economic opportunity. We feel that the provision of economic opportunity would do much to break the poverty cycle and eliminate some of the main disadvantages Navajo people face when compared with the general population.

We feel a "key ingredient" in the making possible of economic opportunity is the development of a master road system for the reservation which could lead to industrialization and urbanization. At the present time about 700 miles of paved road are found on the reservation. At least 3,000 miles are needed.

Our experience has shown that as paved roads are established, people tend to move up to the road making day school attendance possible.

In the meantime, through the parental involvement program, we are endeavoring to encourage parents to visit their children in boarding schools and take them home on weekends. We will continue in our efforts to do this.

Distinguished Committee Members, I guess the main need of all agencies serving Navajo students is more funds. Funds to hire more well-trained people and funds to extend the reach of the schools further into the community. Also, we need more higher education funds from all sources to make education beyond the high school a reality for the increasing number of Navajo high school graduates.

The Headstart Program which the office of Navajo Economic Opportunity has carried on under an Office of Economic Opportunity grant has made a real difference in the lives of many Navajo students.

Finally, we appreciate your efforts on our behalf on kindergartens. This will help.

You have my thanks for the chance to appear before this committee.